

****ATTENTION****

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OAK CREEK AND CLEMEN MOUNTAIN FEEDING STATIONS

WHEN: Late December and January are the best months for viewing. Elk are fed daily at 1:30 p.m. at the Oak Creek Headquarters, and the bighorn sheep are fed between 10-11 a.m. at the Clemén Mountain feeding site. Ample parking is available. There is no charge.

WHERE: Oak Creek Headquarters is located near the junction of Highways 12 and 410, approximately 22 miles west of Yakima. The bighorn sheep feeding site is near the junction, off Highway 410 on the Old Naches Highway.

WHAT

TO BRING: Bring a camera, extra film, warm clothes, binoculars and a lunch.

VISITOR CENTER

HOURS: The visitor center at the Oak Creek Headquarters is open during most weekends from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and at various times mid-week. The center has a slide program, exhibits and a special kids' corner.

For more information, contact the Department of Wildlife Yakima office at 2802 Fruitvale Blvd., Yakima WA 98902-1190 or telephone (509) 575-2740.

Washington Department of Wildlife



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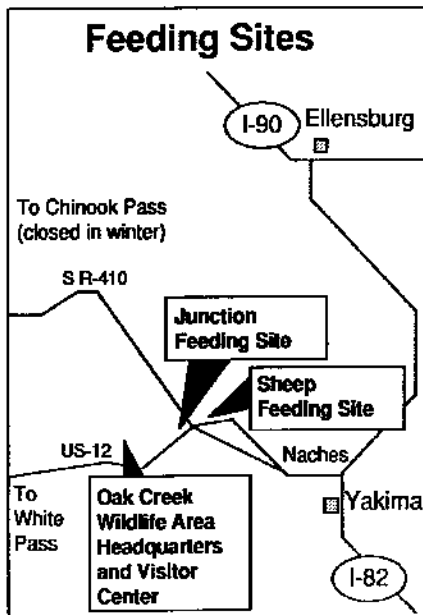
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Rocky Mt. Elk and Bighorn Sheep



Winter Feeding at Oak Creek



Rocky Mountain Elk Facts

• Rocky Mountain Elk were introduced into Yakima County in 1913.

- **Weight:**
 - bulls average 450-900 lbs.
 - yearling bulls weigh less than mature bulls
 - cows average 400-650 lbs.
- **Calves:**
 - born in late May to early July
 - weigh about 30-40 lbs. at birth
 - cows are pregnant for 8-8.5 months
 - twins are rare
- **Antlers:**
 - found on bulls only
 - begin growing when bull is one year old
 - during the growth period, the antlers are covered with a fuzzy skin called velvet
 - velvet covers antlers until fall, providing nutrients for growth
 - used for protection and rut, they fall off in mid-March to April
- **Bugling:**
 - bulls noted for bugling during the fall rut
 - used to challenge other males and attract cows



In 1913, a group of landowners, sportsmen and county officials introduced Rocky Mountain elk from Yellowstone National Park to the Yakima area of eastern Washington.

Unlike the native Roosevelt elk of the Olympic Peninsula, the Rocky Mountain elk are migratory by nature and may travel as much as 70 miles from their spring-to-fall habitat in the upper elevations of the Cascades to their wintering areas at lower elevations.

When snow blankets the mountains, the elk are forced to migrate to the foothills to find food. Here, they come into conflict with man whose orchards, ranches and homes occupy land that the elk need for winter range.

In the mid 1940s, the Department of Wildlife (then Dept. of Game) built almost 100 miles of eight-foot high fences to keep the elk from damaging private property in the Tieton, Naches and Wenatchee River valleys as well as on the south side of the Kittitas Valley.

In 1939, the department established the Oak Creek Wildlife Area to find a winter home for the Yakima elk herd. Primarily recognized as elk winter range, Oak Creek is a sparsely timbered area in the grassy foothills with diversified habitat that benefits other wildlife including deer, grouse, bear, chukar and pheasant. In addition to the elk feeding stations, a bighorn sheep feeding station is located at the Clemens Mountain site on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

Wintering elk may eat from three to six pounds of hay per day, most of which is grown and harvested on department lands. During a severe winter, as many as 5,000 elk may use feeding areas. Elk begin arriving as early as mid-November, with the largest part of the herd arriving in late December and early January.

As the snows melt in the spring, the elk follow the snowline to higher elevations. The bulls gradually separate from the herd and lose their antlers in March and April. Rodents eat the shed antlers.

Cows and calves form groups lead by older cows. Calves are born in June and July, about the same time the bulls begin to grow new antlers.

Elk feed on grasses and sedges which grow in the high meadows through the short summer. This nutri-

tious feed helps the cows provide milk for growing calves and fattens the adult elk for the leaner months of winter.

During late September and into October the bulls rejoin the cows and calves for mating season or "rut." At this time, the high country rings with the sound of the bulls bugling, whistling and barking in competition for cows. As days shorten with the advance of the season and snow returns to the high country, the elk once again migrate to lower elevations.



Once native to the Yakima area, California bighorn sheep died out from diseases carried by domestic cattle and sheep. A herd of about 45 now exists on Clemens Mountain through the efforts of sportsmen who reintroduced bighorns from a British Columbia herd in 1967.

During the winter, male and female bighorn sheep of all ages congregate at the Clemens Mountain feeding station. In the spring, however, the older rams separate into bachelor groups.

Early in the spring, the young rams (one and one-half to three years old) remain somewhat apart, but still close to the ewes and lambs. Once the newborn lambs arrive, these young rams become castoffs and the group now consists of the newborns, the previous year's offspring and the ewes.

Mature rams rejoin the ewes as the breeding season begins early in November. As winter sets in, the sheep seek sun-warmed south-facing slopes in lower elevations, where the snow accumulation is the lightest.

Both rams and ewes grow horns which never fall off. The ewes' horns are small and pointed, while the rams develop a curl in their horns as they mature. A dark band, or annulus, is formed each year on the horns during the mating season. By counting these bands, you can get an approximate age of the animal.

Bighorn sheep are well adapted to living on rocky slopes with little food or water evident. Grasses and sedges make up most of their diet, and they are attracted to mineral and salt licks.

California Bighorn Sheep Facts

- **Weight:**
 - rams about 180-200 lbs.
 - ewes about 100-150 lbs.
- **Lambs:**
 - born in May and June
 - weigh about seven to 10 lbs.
 - ewes are pregnant for six months
 - twins sometimes occur
- **Horns:**
 - both rams and ewes have horns
 - curled on rams, short and pointed on ewes
 - never fall off and grow through sheep's lifetime
 - annulus, or band, shows one year's growth

